

## Code of Conduct (Staff)

### No changes needed

Approved on	29th November 2023
Signature of Chair of Trustees	<i>Julie Winyard</i>

### Change Record

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### Introduction

The Essex and Thames SCITT is committed to providing a professional and ethical environment, which serves and protects the whole education community. Certain expectations for good conduct are described in specific policies and procedures e.g. discipline, equal opportunities and whistleblowing. Professional expectations are set out in national standards for QTS. This policy supplements these provisions and provides additional guidance for staff.

The overriding expectation is that staff will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, pupils, students or the public in general and all those with whom they work. This means that adults should not behave through words, actions or inaction in a manner that would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model. Staff are expected to exemplify [Fundamental British Values](#)

### Scope

This Code applies to all those working for the partnership. Any breaches of the Code of Conduct Policy will be regarded as a serious matter that could result in disciplinary action and possible dismissal.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Partnership of Schools**

#### **CEO and SCITT SLT**

It is the responsibility of the CEO and SCITT SLT to promptly address any breaches of good conduct and behaviour, using informal procedures where possible but implementing formal procedures where necessary.

#### **Employees, externally contracted staff and Trainees and Apprentices or apprentices**

It is the responsibility of all Employees and externally contracted staff to familiarise themselves, and comply with this policy and all procedures, conditions of service and relevant professional standards.

#### **Safer Practice for Work with Children and Young People**

It is important that all adults working with children understand that the nature of their work and the responsibilities related to it place them in a position of trust. Staff must be clear about appropriate and safe behaviours for working with children, in paid or unpaid capacities, in all settings and in all contexts.

#### **Underpinning Principles**

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- It is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people;
- Adults who work with children are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct that would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions;
- The same professional standards should always be applied regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity;
- It is the responsibility of Staff to ensure that their behaviour complies with Part 2 of the QTS standards and never brings the partnership into disrepute;
- Adults should continually monitor and review their practice and ensure they follow the guidance contained in this document.

**Appendix A** sets out guidance on safer working practices that all staff are expected to follow.

### **Reporting breaches of standards of good conduct**

The SCITT is committed to achieving high standards of integrity and accountability and expects the same commitment from its employees, externally contracted staff, Trainees and others working in the partnership's schools. As such the partnership wishes to promote an open environment that enables staff to raise issues in a constructive way and with confidence that they will be acted upon appropriately without fear of recrimination. All employees and externally contracted staff will be expected to bring to the attention of their line managers any deficiency in the provision of service or care. Trainees will be expected to bring to the attention of their Personal Tutor any deficiency in the provision of service or care. Similarly any impropriety or breach of policy must be reported in the same way. Procedures for reporting concerns are set in the SCITT Concerns and Complaints Policy.

### **Confidentiality**

- Working in the partnership environment means having access, in a variety of ways, to information that must be regarded as confidential. As a general rule, all information received in the course of employment, no matter how it is received, should be regarded as sensitive and confidential;
- Employees and externally contracted staff should use their discretion regarding these matters, and should seek further advice from their Line Manager;
- Employees and externally contracted staff must be aware that they may be obliged to disclose information relating to child protection issues and should make it clear to the individual either that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and/or decline to receive the information and direct them to a more appropriate colleague.

### **Responsibility of employees and externally contracted staff in possession of sensitive information**

Employees and externally contracted staff have a responsibility to make sure sensitive information is stored securely.

They should:

- Make sure filing cabinets are kept locked when unattended;
- Make sure sensitive information is not left on desks or the photocopier or printer;
- Make sure papers are not left lying around at home or in the car. If confidential materials or paperwork are taken out of the partnership offices or schools, precautions must be taken to ensure they are not accessible to third parties;

- Make sure steps are taken to ensure that private/confidential telephone calls/conversations are not overheard;
- Make sure meetings where sensitive or confidential information is being discussed are held in a secure environment;
- Make sure confidential paperwork should be disposed of correctly either by shredding it or using the confidential waste facility;
- Make sure personal data is not used for training or demonstration purposes where fictional data can be used.

Employees and externally contracted staff have a responsibility to ensure that computer data is stored securely. They should:

- Make sure computer data is not left exposed to others' view when unattended – screensavers should be used;
- Make sure machines are switched off when leaving the office;
- Not disclose passwords to other colleagues unless absolutely necessary;
- Make sure sensitive data is not stored in public folders;
- Be familiar with the security of email/internet systems;
- Make sure any user IDs and passwords remain confidential;
- Ensure computer files are backed up regularly and not solely saved to the hard drive.

#### **Use of computers, email and the internet**

- The use of electronic mail as a medium for paper mail replacement and as a means of enhancing communications is encouraged;
- Those using the partnership's electronic mail services and/or the internet are expected to do so responsibly and to comply with all applicable laws, policies and procedures, and with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct;
- Computers and laptops loaned to employees and externally contracted staff, by the partnership, are provided to support their professional responsibilities and employees and externally contracted staff must notify their employer of any significant personal use;
- Employees and externally contracted staff must not use partnership equipment or property for personal gain or fraudulent, malicious, illegal, libelous, immoral, dangerous, offensive purposes;
- Employees and externally contracted staff should not undertake IT related activities that are contrary to the partnership policies or business interests including accessing, downloading, storing, creating, copying or distributing offensive material (this includes but is not limited to pornographic, sexual, violent or criminal content and racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory material);

- All forms of chain mail are unacceptable and the transmission of user names, passwords or other information related to the security of the partnership's computers is not permitted.
- All staff **must** apply 'Safe Search' settings to their Google accounts, before accessing SCITT systems. [www.google.com/sfaesearch](http://www.google.com/sfaesearch)

### **Personal Use**

The partnership's e-mail and internet service may be used for incidental personal purposes, with the approval of the CEO, provided that it does not:

- Interfere with the partnership's operation of computing facilities or email services;
- Interfere with the user's employment or other obligations to the partnership;
- Interfere with the performance of professional duties;
- Is of a reasonable duration and frequency;
- Is performed in non-work time;
- Does not overburden the system or create any additional expense to the partnership;
- Does not bring the partnership and its employees into disrepute.

Such use must not be for:

- Unlawful activities;
- Commercial purposes not under the auspices of the partnership;
- Personal financial gain;
- Personal use that is inconsistent with other partnership policies or guidelines.

If an employee fails to meet these conditions for personal use, their rights to use equipment may be withdrawn. If an employee fails to follow this policy and other supporting procedures this could result in disciplinary action.

### Use of email and internet at home

Access to the internet from an employee's or externally contracted staff member's home using a partnership-owned computer or through partnership-owned connections must adhere to all the policies that apply to their use. Family members or other non-employees must not be allowed to access the partnership's computer system or use the partnership's computer facilities, without the formal agreement of their line manager.

### **Security**

- The partnership follows sound professional practices to secure email records, data and system programmes under its control. As with standard paper-based mail systems, confidentiality of email cannot be 100% assured. Consequently users should consider

the risks when transmitting highly confidential or sensitive information and use the appropriate level of security measure;

- In order to effectively manage the email system, the following should be adhered to:
  - Open mailboxes must not be left unattended;
  - Care should be taken about the content of an email as it has the same standing as a memo or letter. Both the individual who sent the message and/or the partnership can be sued for libel;
  - Reporting immediately to SCITT administration when a virus is suspected in an email.

## **Privacy**

The partnership respects users' privacy. Email content will not be routinely inspected or monitored, nor content disclosed without the originator's consent. However, under the following circumstances such action may be required:

- When required by law;
- If there is a substantiated reason to believe that a breach of the law or partnership's policy has taken place;
- When there are emergency or compelling circumstances.

The partnership reserves the right, at its discretion, to review any employees' or externally contracted staff member's electronic files and messages to the extent necessary to ensure electronic media and services are being used in compliance with the law, this policy and other policies. Employees will be notified of any monitoring that will take place and the reason for it. Monitoring will be reasonable and in accordance with Data Protection and Human Rights obligations.

Employees and externally contracted staff should not have any expectation of privacy to their internet usage. The partnership reserves the right to inspect any and all files stored in computers or on the network in order to assure compliance with this policy. Auditors must be given the right of access to any document, information or explanation that they require.

## **Staff Email/IT Protocols**

Staff must adhere to the following:

- Except in rare cases all emails must receive a response within 48 hours (2 working days). In the case of absence it is the absentee responsibility to delegate their email management to another member of staff if necessary;

- Once emails have been read and dealt with they must be filed under “pending” or “dealt with”. All other emails should then be deleted. Inboxes should only contain current work;
- Any emails forwarded by another member of staff must be given a received response;
- During holidays all email accounts must carry an auto response detailing who to contact in your absence;
- Staff must respect all copyrights and cannot copy, retrieve, modify or forward copyrighted materials except as permitted by the copyright owner;

If a user finds themselves connected accidentally to a site that contains sexually explicit or offensive material, they must disconnect from that site immediately. Such unintentional access to inappropriate internet sites must be reported immediately to the CEO. Any failure to report such access may result in disciplinary action.

### **Data Protection**

The SCITT has a Data and Records Management Policy. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that they are familiar with the contents of this policy.

### **Relationships**

It is the responsibility of staff to declare at the start of each academic year any personal relationships or business interests that may cause a professional conflict of interest. This may include:

- Where there is a conflict of interest or where there is reasonable doubt about their ability to act impartially;
- Where they have pecuniary interest, for example contracts;
- If a relative (including spouse) living with them has pecuniary interest.

All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, must be made known to the CEO/Chair of Trustees. Orders and contracts must be in accordance with standing orders and financial regulations of the county council and the partnership. No special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.

Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, must declare that relationship to the Headteacher of the Lead School, the CEO or, if appropriate, to the Headteachers’ Executive Committee.

## **Gifts, Legacies, Bequests and Hospitality**

See the anti-fraud and bribery policy.

### **Close personal relationships at work**

Situations arise where relations, or those in other close relationships, may be employed at the partnership and it is recognised that close personal relationships can be formed at work.

Close personal relationships are defined as:

- Employees who are married, dating, in a partnership or cohabiting arrangement;
- Immediate family members for example parent, child, sibling, grandparent/child;
- Other relationships for example extended family (cousins, uncles, in-laws), close friendships, business associates (outside the partnership).

Whilst not all such situations where those in close personal relationships work together raise issues of conflict of interest, implications can include:

- Effect on trust and confidence;
- Perception of service users, the public and other employees on professionalism and fairness;
- Operational issues e.g. working patterns, financial and procurement separation requirements;
- Conflicting loyalties and breaches of confidentiality and trust.

Open, constructive and confidential discussion between staff and managers is essential to ensure these implications do not occur.

It is inappropriate for an employee to line manage or sit on an appointment panel, for those with whom they have a close personal relationship. Employees must not be involved in any decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustment for anyone where there is a close personal relationship. If this was the case, the CEO would need to identify another individual to undertake the particular responsibility, so that a 'conflict of interest' situation is avoided.

Any applicants applying for positions are required to disclose on their application form if they:

- Are a relative or partner of, or;
- Have a close personal relationship with any employee in the partnership.

Applicants are asked to state the name of the person and the relationship. Failure to disclose such a relationship may disqualify the applicant.

Employees should discuss confidentiality with the CEO/line manager, any relationships with an applicant.

If a close personal relationship is formed between two colleagues in the partnership this should be disclosed, in confidence, to the line manager by the employees concerned as this may impact on the conduct of the partnership.

It is important to ensure that any approach or actions are not unfair or discriminatory. Nevertheless it is important to explore, in discussion with the employees concerned, the issues that may arise to ensure these can be managed effectively.

Colleagues who feel they are affected by a close personal relationship at work involving other colleagues should at all times feel that they can discuss this, without prejudice, with the CEO, Headteacher of the Lead School, Headteachers' Executive Committee or School Governing Body.

### **Neutrality**

Partnership staff serve the community as a whole. It follows that they must serve all members of the partnership community, including the school community where they spend much of their time. They will also come into contact with the public and must ensure that the individual rights of all of these groups are respected. Employees must not allow their own personal, political, religious or other views and opinions to interfere with their work.

### **Political Restriction**

Employees are not restricted from political activity but their behaviour must never bring the partnership into disrepute.

### **Use of financial resources**

Partnership staff must ensure that they use public and other funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner. They must strive to ensure value for money and to avoid legal challenges to the partnership. They must also observe the DfE financial regulations and partnership's financial regulations.

### **Sponsorship**

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a partnership activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. The sponsorship should always be related to the partnership's interests

and/or the authority's departmental or corporate activities and never for personal benefit only. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.